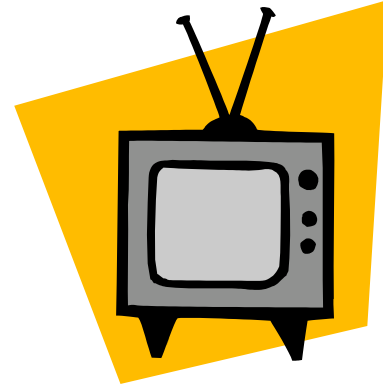


INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS
BTMM 400
Fall 2005
Professor Renee Hobbs
Temple University

Synopsis

This course provides graduate students with a conceptual overview of the study of the mass media through an examination of theoretical concepts of texts, audiences, and media industries within a cultural, political and historical context.



Faculty

Renee Hobbs, Ed.D.

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Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, 11:30 – 12:30, and 3:30 – 4:30. Other times by appointment.

Course Meeting Times and Locations

Wednesdays, 5:10 – 8:30 p.m.

Temple University Center City Campus

Room 216

Required Readings

Epstein, Edward J. (2005). *The Big Picture: The New Logic of Money and Power in Hollywood*. New York: Random House.

McCloud, Scott (1993). *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper.

Starr, Paul (2004). *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications*. New York: Basic Books.

Bird, Elizabeth (2003). *The Audience in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

NOTE: Additional suggested readings will be posted on the Blackboard site under “Course Documents.”

Course Goals and Objectives

1. Students will gain knowledge of key theoretical concepts from aesthetics and visual communication to examine how time, space and point of view are manipulated in visual media;
2. Students will gain knowledge of how people use the mass media in everyday life, including the phenomena of media scandals, fan culture, representations of race and ethnicity, tabloid journalism and media hoaxes.
3. Students will gain knowledge about the history, economics and industry structure of modern communications from the post office to the present day, with a focus on examining how early political contexts in the U.S. and Western nations have shaped the differing structure of various media industries.
4. Students will gain knowledge about how changes in technology are shaping contemporary film and television production, with a focus on digital media, film studios and television networks.
5. Students strengthen communication, analysis, and critical thinking skills through activities that require the synthesis of divergent ideas, information, and concepts;
6. Students improve research skills involving gathering, accessing and evaluating information using print and online materials, including reference books, professional and scholarly publications, reports, and web content;
7. Students strengthen media production and performance skills through the construction of a poster display and an oral presentation.

Course Requirements

Each of the assignments listed below will be introduced by the instructor, who will provide in writing specific expectations and criteria to be used for evaluation. Assignment materials for each of the assignments listed below will be available under “Assignments” on the course Blackboard site.

Responding to Course Readings (100 points)

Students complete weekly “concept cards” which demonstrate their mastery of key ideas from the course readings.

“Leap” Papers (300 pts)

Students complete three short papers where students “leap” from an idea or concept in the course readings to explore ideas from another significant source (a key theorist, a contrasting or competing perspective, new scholarship on a related topic, a contemporary news story that relates to the readings, etc.). Students will master the use of online databases and other library information resources to write brief critical reviews approximately 5 pages in length. These assignments and their deadlines will be scheduled individually and students will have the opportunity to select the dates that their papers will be due. During each class period, at least three students will be asked to summarize their Leap papers with the class. Students will post their papers on the Blackboard and will be used as required readings for the course.

Paper #1 Review of a Key Theorist

In this paper, students select a key theorist whose work relates to the course reading for the week and write a descriptive review of their major contributions to the field.

Paper #2 Chapter or Article Precis

In this paper, students find a scholarly research article that significantly connects to the course reading for the week and write a précis.

Paper #3 News Media Connection

In this paper, students find a news story about the mass media from the recent past that relates to the course reading for the week and write an analysis based on coverage found in the *New York Times* or the *Economist*. You'll show the connection between the topics studied in the course and the media news story you've selected.

Research Paper or Project (300 pts)

Students examine a specific research topic related to key ideas explored in this course. You'll conduct research to acquire expertise on the topic and write a scholarly paper (15 – 25 pages) describing what you've learned, connecting your focus topic to issues explored in the course. With approval from the instructor, you may present your work in alternative formats, including a website, documentary or multimedia production. You will make a formal class presentation on your topic, responding to questions from peers and the instructor. You will also create a poster display that documents your work for an audience of SCT graduate students and faculty.

Final Examination (150 pts)

A final exam measures your ability to demonstrate knowledge learned in the course and apply theories, concepts and ideas in responding to new material.

Class Participation (150 points)

Quality of class preparation, engagement and leadership are evaluated at midterm time and at the end of the semester.

Grading Scale

Please note that the instructor uses the following grading scale, which may differ from other scales you are familiar with.

1000 – 980	A+
979 – 950	A
949 – 900	A-
899 – 850	B+
849 – 800	B
799 – 750	B-
749 – 700	C+

699 – 650	C
649 – 600	C-
599 – 550	D+
549 – 500	D
<500	F

NOTE: There are no make-up opportunities for missed homework, papers or other assignments. Please do not ask for an exception. Because media businesses rely on strict adherence to deadlines, this course employs a deadline standard similar to most print and TV newsrooms. Work submitted later than 6 pm. on the due date will not be evaluated or counted for course credit.

Policy on Revision

Because revision is such an integral part of the writing process, students will be permitted an opportunity to revise one paper. The grade for the revision will replace the original grade. Revisions are due on the last day of class.

Policy on Disabilities and Special Needs

Any students who have a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation. Contact Disability Resources at (215) 204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Policy on Plagiarism

Students are expected to produce substantial amounts of writing for this course, and it is expected that you will be the author of all the work you submit. Students should use the American Psychological Association (APA) citation format for identifying all materials used for reference and information gathering. Please consult the instructor(s) if you have questions on how to identify the information sources that you use in preparing your work. Penalties for plagiarism may range from a reduced grade on an assignment to failing the course.

Policy on Attendance and Class Participation

Attendance at all classes is expected as a sign of your intellectual curiosity and commitment to the learning process. The instructor will use class attendance as one element to assess class participation. More than one missed class in the semester will lower your course grade. Students are expected to fully participate in all interactive learning experiences and to demonstrate critical thinking and synthesis skills in small group discussion. Students may also receive class participation credit for using the online discussion forums on Blackboard.

BTMM 400
Introduction to Communication Concepts
Course Schedule
Fall 2005
Professor Renee I

PART I		INTRODUCTION	
W 9/31		The Role of Mass Media in Contemporary Culture	
W 9/7		Frameworks for Mass Media Scholarship READ: Communication as Collective Memory by Carole Blair READ: Communication as Vision by Cara Finnegan READ: Communication as Embodiment by Carolyn Marvin DUE: One-paragraph of “possibilities” for Research Paper	
PART II		UNDERSTANDING TEXTS & AUDIENCES	
W 9/14		How Visual Texts Work READ: McCloud, Understanding Comics, pgs 1 - 117	
W 9/21		Semiotics and Technological Determinism READ: McCloud, Understanding Comics, pgs 118 - 215 DUE: Preliminary Concept, Final Paper	
W 9/28		The Audience in Everyday Life READ: Bird, The Audience in Everyday Life (pgs. 1 – 85)	
W 10/5		Negotiating Identity in a Media World READ: Bird, The Audience in Everyday Life (pgs. 86 – 117) READ: Steeves, “Feminist Theory and Media Studies”	
W 10/12		Cultural Studies and Aesthetics READ: Bird, The Audience in Everyday Life (pgs. 118 – 192) DUE: Preliminary Bibliography, Final Paper	
PART III		MEDIA INSTITUTIONS & CONTEXTS	
W 10/26		The Opening of the Public Sphere READ: Starr, The Creation of the Media (pgs. 1 – 152)	

W 11/2	Technological Networks and New Media READ: Starr, The Creation of the Media (pgs. 153 –326)
W 11/9	Key Concepts in Broadcasting READ: Starr, The Creation of the Media (pgs. 327 – 402)
W 11/16	Contemporary Media Economics READ: Epstein, The Big Picture (pgs. 1 – 352)
W 11/23	Student Presentations, Final Paper
W 11/30	Student Presentations, Final Paper
W 12/7	Last Day of Class: Review and Synthesis DUE: Final Paper
TH 12/8	Final Paper Poster Presentation (Atrium, Annenberg Hall)
TBA	FINAL EXAMINATION